

NEW PROGRAM TO IMPROVE TAXPAYER TREATMENT AND SERVICE

WASHINGTON -- Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Charles O. Rossotti has named IRS executive Bob Wenzel to head up the implementation of hundreds of recommendations to improve IRS's treatment of taxpayers and the service it provides them. As head of the new Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvements Program, Wenzel will report directly to Commissioner Rossotti.

A career IRS executive, Wenzel returns to the National Office after serving as the Director of the Fresno (California) Service Center. In 1997, he was co-chair of the Customer Service Task force, a joint effort of the National Performance Review, the Treasury Department, and the IRS.

The IRS has taken a number of steps recently to improve the service it offers taxpayers. Toll-free telephone lines for tax assistance and forms orders are now open 6 days a week, 16 hours a day. Over 150 IRS offices across the country were open last Saturday and will be open each of the remaining Saturdays until April 15 for walk-in service. And monthly Problem Solving Days, first held last November, will continue to be offered across the country to help taxpayers resolve long-standing tax problems.

Rossotti created the Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvements Program to coordinate, plan and manage the hundreds of recommendations the IRS is receiving

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and the specific commitments it has already made. Recommendations have come from such external stakeholders as the Senate Finance Committee, Vice President Gore's National Performance Review, the General Accounting Office and the Commission to Restructure the IRS. The program team will also study the many recommendations from other sources, including Internal Audit reports, IRS employee feedback and -- perhaps most important -- recommendations and comments from taxpayers.

Wenzel and his staff will ensure that all these suggestions are evaluated and that decisions are made in a timely and coordinated way. They will also ensure that all major commitments made to external stakeholders are coordinated and implemented consistent with both the near-term and long-term goals of the IRS in mind.

"I'm delighted that Bob Wenzel has agreed to head up this important new effort," Rossotti said. "Bob has a great track record of working to improve the service that the IRS provides the nation's taxpayers. His efforts on the IRS Customer Service Task Force led to such improvements as expanded hours for toll-free telephone assistance and the creation of monthly Problem Solving Days."

The Taxpayer Treatment and Service Improvements Program's efforts will complement those of the management consulting firm of Booz-Allen & Hamilton, which was recently selected to validate the new IRS Modernization Concept announced by Commissioner Rossotti in January. Wenzel's program will focus on improving service to and treatment of taxpayers today while the Booz-Allen effort will be focused on long-term organizational changes to the IRS that will enable the Service to become the customer-focused agency that taxpayers deserve.